



House Education Committee Public Testimony

HB 5618, HB 5619, HB 5620

DaQuann Harrison

Youth Facilitator, Youth Action Michigan

My name is DaQuann Harrison. I am the Youth Facilitator of Youth Action Michigan in Ypsilanti, a program of Student Advocacy Center, and a student at the WAVE program.

I am pleased to offer support for HB 5618, HB 5619, and HB 5620. I think these bills could have helped me.

In May of 2015, I officially became a victim of bullying....day in and day out 4 males who were considered "dangerous" in the school always had something to say to me or even would attempt to harm me. I began to receive house visits, threats over the phone and eventually getting my belongings stolen.

I did report what happened but nothing was taking place to bring safety and peace to the situation. The last day for seniors was approaching and word got out that 3 seniors were coming to "jump" me. I was terrified.

The building assistant told me " don't fight back because you'll get in trouble, you been doing so well that fighting wouldn't look good and chances will become slim to play ball."

So me being a fanatic for football I actually took that into consideration. But soon after that conversation I got on social media and begin to see threats towards me. The pressure got so tough for me that night I even thought about suicide so I wouldn't have to endure that pain and embarrassment the next day. All of a sudden I begin to think about my faith in God and my little sisters who needed me. So i went to sleep and couldn't sleep throughout the night and fully woke up around 5am.

I sat and thought about different steps to take but none seemed safe. So I grabbed an airsoft gun and took the Co2 air tank and clip out of it because, I didn't want anyone hurt. I was just bringing it as a "scare tactic." After I put that in my bag I thought about what if I can't reach to my bag quick enough or if they take it. What would I do then? Who would save me ?

So I went downstairs and grabbed a small 3.6 inch knife from my kitchen drawer and put it in my pants pocket and left out of my home not knowing if I was going to return home that day.....I was on the bus and began to cry quietly and thought to myself, if it's my time it's my time.



I also begin to think about what if they don't almost kill me then the trouble I would get in for these weapons. I begin to gain the courage to just toss the stuff out the window, but as soon as I reached into my bag pack it was just a little too late, the bus was already in clear view with other buses.

So I just said skip it and walked into school, just smiling to hide the pain and fear. Not even 30 minutes into the class, the door opened and the building assistants come and said, "DaQuann bring your stuff let's go."

Eventually, I was expelled for 180 days, and it's been a hard year. I'm in an alternative program, but I am having a hard time earning credit without more support. Being in an alternative program that is virtual is very challenging to remain focus. Not only is school a challenge but me being practically homeless is a very rough path for me as well.

If these bills had been law when this all happened to me, I wonder how things would have turned out differently? I feel if restorative circles were in place before I was expelled than it would have changed the outcome of my actions. I would have had the opportunity to be in a safe area with the students who were trying to harm me and resolve the issues. It became so overwhelming by trying to figure things out by myself without no help from staff or peers.

I wish "lesser interventions" have been considered, including counseling, more resources, shorter term suspension.

Although school is very tough, I'm doing very well in other areas, especially being involved with Student Advocacy Center. I was then connected with a mentoring program through SAC called "Check and Connect." I am now enrolled with two very powerful and great mentors (Anell Eccleston and Peri Stone-Palmquist). I am also an Intern with Ypsilanti Community School District, Youth Action Michigan Faciltator, Youth Voice on Washtenaw School Justice Partnership School Board, and Washtenaw County Youth Outreach Coordinator.

Now that the community has my back and best interest in heart, It's time that the school system does the same. Thank you for taking time to read my story and beginning to make change.